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**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**LS 6374**

**BILL NUMBER:** SB 537

**NOTE PREPARED:** Nov 27, 2002

**BILL AMENDED:**

**SUBJECT:** Discharge of Long Term Inmates.

**FIRST AUTHOR:** Sen. Bowser

**FIRST SPONSOR:**

**BILL STATUS:** As Introduced

**FUNDS AFFECTED:** X **GENERAL**  
**DEDICATED**  
**FEDERAL**

**IMPACT:** State & Local

**Summary of Legislation:** This bill has the following provisions:

It requires the Department of Correction to provide for an automatic, one-time review of a long term inmate's sentence to determine whether the inmate has been rehabilitated and has suitable plans that would warrant discharge from the Department. It applies only to inmates who have been confined to the Department for at least 25 years, not including inmates who receive sentences of death. It requires the Department to establish a panel separate from the parole board to conduct the review. It requires the panel to consider all relevant factors when determining whether to discharge the inmate, with special consideration to be given to an inmate who: (1) has a good conduct history during confinement; (2) has suitable plans if discharged; and (3) is at least a high school graduate or the equivalent.

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2003.

**Explanation of State Expenditures:** Depending on the decisions made by the sentence review panel, this bill may reduce the number of offenders in Department of Correction (DOC) facilities in the long term and increase the number of offenders who may need to be supervised on parole. Operations of a review panel may involve some meeting and travel reimbursement costs based on panel membership as determined by the DOC.

This bill could apply to 1,967 adult offenders serving sentences of 50 or more years, whose actual prison terms may be 25 years or more (based on sentence credit time earned). As of November 12, 2002, there were 115 offenders who had been imprisoned in DOC facilities for 25 years or longer. Depending on the number of offenders who are released, the state could save between \$1,825 and \$22,131 per year per offender.

The average cost of \$1,825 would apply if only a few offenders are released due to this provision. This amount represents the cost of housing offenders in existing facilities with no additional staff, and avoiding having to provide medicines, food, and clothing for these offenders who are released. If a significant number of offenders are released, the state could save as much as \$25,087 per offender. This savings can occur if DOC facilities can avoid adding new personnel, including correctional officers, program staff, and other support staff, as well as avoiding having to provide food, clothing, and medicines for these offenders.

More offenders being released may increase parole expenses if more sex offenders are released early and need to be supervised. Since 1994, sex offenders may be assigned parole supervision for up to ten years. (The number of offenders on parole was 5,887 offenders on July 1, 2002, as compared to 3,400 in 1995 . There are 72 parole agent positions, 8 district supervisors, 2 assistant district supervisors, and 2 central office supervisors.

**Explanation of State Revenues:**

**Explanation of Local Expenditures:**

**Explanation of Local Revenues:**

**State Agencies Affected:** Department of Correction.

**Local Agencies Affected:**

**Information Sources:** Department of Correction Planning Division.

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